



EO

88 min

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In *EO*, Polish filmmaker Jerzy Skolimowski paints a striking portrait of modern-day Europe. It's beautifully impressionistic at times, cold and cruel at others, and with a unique perspective: a donkey's. An update of Robert Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar*, *EO* follows the life and adventures of the titular main character as he changes hands and trots across Europe. After the circus that *EO* performs in goes bankrupt, he is carted off as repossessed property, and so begins our petite hero's adventure. As *EO* travels from city to city while he seeks freedom, we are treated to something rare: a film that thrives in the limitations it sets for itself. *EO* is mostly wordless, with few interruptions from humans, and this works in the film's favor. Indeed, the most emotionally effective moments do not stem from dialogue but from the gravity placed on certain shots and scenes. For instance, early in his journey *EO* is looking out at the rolling fields passing him by as he's taken to his post-circus life. He watches a herd of horses, running and grazing at their leisure. We're then treated to leisurely shots of the horses, warm sun glinting off of their bodies, cool grass below. *EO*'s desire for freedom in that moment is beautifully rendered and practically silent. It's a tender gift the film never stops giving us: a glimpse into an animal's soul. If the visually inventive nature of the film isn't enough to entice you, the few human performances in the film are worth seeing, too (hello, Isabelle Huppert). Pure, tender cinema is rare nowadays, but *EO* delivers. Manohla Dargis of the New York Times summed up her review with this paragraph – "As you may have guessed, *EO*'s life, alas, is not one of freedom and kindness, even if the movie overflows with both. Life is brutal for animals, *EO* included. Skolimowski isn't scolding us or trying to punish us for *EO*'s fate. Rather, if anything, in this remarkable movie, he is inviting us to make the empathetic leap across species and consciousness, to look at the world we've made for ourselves and to see, really see, what we lose by treating other beings as lesser. We lose the world. Perhaps this sounds grim, but no movie that I've seen this year has moved me as deeply, made me feel as optimistic about cinema or engaged me with such intellectual vigor as *EO*, whose octogenarian genius auteur and all the donkeys who play *EO* — Hola, Tako, Marietta, Ettore, Rocco and Mela — deserve all the love and the carrots, too."

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